

# The House Across the Way

BY

LEE OWEN SNOOK



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Franklin, Ohio

# THE HOUSE ACROSS THE WAY.

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A Comedy Drama

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By LEE OWEN SNOOK.

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**ELDRIDGE ENTERTAINMENT HOUSE,**  
FRANKLIN, - OHIO

## CAST OF CHARACTERS.

FREDA JONES

BETTY RICHARDS

DOROTHY WINTERS

JANE KELLER

—Co-eds.

BOB LIVINGSTONE

CHAUNCEY WALLINGFORD

HAL WICKLAND

JACK SPENCER

—Students at Arlington  
Academy.

PROF. JOHANN SCHNITZEL—A superannuated botanist.

MRS. VON KLEIN—Preceptress Emeritus, and a widow  
with ambitions.

MRS. WARREN DEBRACEY—An unconscious trouble-  
maker.

MRS. WANTHE KALE—In charge of the Waldorf Flats.

EZA LEE FATIGUED—Drawing pay as a janitor.

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### ACT ONE.

Time—Early autumn.

Place—A wood near Arlington Academy.

The picnic party arrives.

### ACT TWO.

Place—The Waldorf Flats.

Time—Two days later.

### ACT THREE.

Place—A tenement building across the alley from the  
Waldorf Flats.

Time—Four days later.

### ACT FOUR

Place—Same as in Act One.

Time—Ten days later.

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# The House Across The Way.

## ACT I.

(*Scene, a wood. Enter Mrs. von Klein with basket, closely followed by all four couples. Mrs. von Klein in front center, the remainder equally divided: two couples on either side. Speaking characters should occupy place nearest audience.*)

Mrs. von K. (*Depositing basket in center and looking all about with great satisfaction*). An ideal location to be sure! The professor was right when he said this was the naturalist's paradise! These wooded bowers, yonder gently sloping hills with the purest of blue overhead! The professor was indeed right!

(*All follow chaperon's oratorical speech closely, and Hal, without being seen by her, mimics every gesture and attitude, much to the enjoyment of the others.*)

Bob. (*with affected dignity*). Ladies and Gentlemen:—and you too, Wickland, (*business of dodging a well-aimed blow from Hal's cane*)—I move you that we extend a vote of thanks to our worthy chaperon and to Professor Schnitzel for their invaluable services of the past as well as of the present!

Chauncey (*with his characteristic drawl*). I second the motion.

Bob. All in favor of the motion as stated, make it known by saying "I."

All. (*enthusiastically*). I!

Bob. Motion carried. Is there any other business?

Hal. Yes, there's some unfinished business that is going to be finished mighty soon if you undertake to slander my spotless character by another such thrust as you made a moment ago. I stand ready to defend my sacred honor. (*much bravado*).

*Jack.* Ah sit down before you break something. Are you going to be a kid all your life? We came out here for a picnic, not an oratorical contest.

*Mrs. von K.* There! there! boys. Let's have no ill feeling on such an auspicious occasion as this. Let nothing but gladness rule today.

*(Jack and Hal exchange sly, knowing glances at the success of their little ruse.)*

*Jane.* *(to chaperon).* In order to separate these two warring factions, I shall conduct Hal to the spring which we passed a short distance from here, and we can bring enough water for dinner. Does my suggestion meet with your approval, Mrs. von Klein?

*Mrs. von K.* A very sensible and practical suggestion. You have my permission if you have Hal's.

*(Jane takes Hal by the arm, and he accompanies her reluctantly, pail in hand, as if much displeased. When at extreme left, both turn and wave a merry good-bye, while Mrs. von K. is busy with the details of unpacking, and does not see it.)*

*Freda.* We must have wood for the dinner fire, Mrs. von Klein, and if you are willing, I shall ask the other disturbing element to go with me to collect fuel.

*Mrs. von K.* A good idea! Go right along! *(Exit Freda and Jack at right.)*

*(Bob unfolds camp chair at right and places it in readiness for chaperon.)*

*Bob.* Do have a seat, Mrs. von Klein, I know you must be awfully hot and tired after our long walk.

*(Mrs. von K. accepts, smilingly, expressing her thanks. Chauncey leans lazily against tree at left meanwhile.)*

*Betty.* Shall we unpack the baskets now?

*Mrs. von K.* You might as well, dear, for it will be late when we get back to town anyway. We spent so much time on the way, you know.

*Dorothy.* (looking up from where she is already busy spreading out the tablecloth on the ground). Why, what time is it, Bob?

*Bob.* (looks at watch). 12:15 to the second.

(During the course of the conversation which follows, the baskets are unpacked, and everything is made ready for lunch.)

*Dorothy.* My, how time does fly when one's out for a good time!

*Chauncey.* (with a slow drawl). Yes, good company does make a lot of difference. (Both girls look up quickly at speaker.)

*Dorothy.* Well I hope you don't class yourself as good company. Why, you haven't said a word since we climbed the rail fence back there half an hour ago.

*Chauncey.* For the love of Mike! girl, does a fellow have to chatter along like a magpie to be company? I'll leave it to Betty, there. Am I company, or not?

*Betty.* (confused, appears not to hear). Dorothy, did you think to put some salt in the basket when you packed it?

*Bob.* (Hilariously.) Stung! Sound taps, it's sleeping time again. (*Chauncey shifts weight to other foot, but says nothing.*)

*Mrs. von K.* You will pardon me if I appear to be taking too much liberty, but I have noticed an increasing amount of slang among young folks of late, and I always feel like crying out against it whenever I hear it. (Turning to Bob who stands at her left, hands thrust deep into his pockets.) Couldn't you have used a better word than that horrid expression STUNG?

*Bob.* Well, yes. I might have said, "You appear to have lost the argument," but that would have taken the punch out of my statement. I beg your pardon, though, Mrs. von Klein, if my bowery stuff failed to make a hit with you.

(*Mrs. von K. makes gesture of despair and shakes her*

head slowly, while Bob nearly bursts with suppressed laughter.)

Chauncey. (to Mrs. von K.). He thinks that kind of talk makes him companionable.

Mrs. von K. It's all a delusion. If we could only realize how perfectly awful slang sounds, I know we would never use it.

Bob. (who has pilfered something to eat from the generous store). I'll admit that it is a bad habit, but on the square it just seems like I can't cut it out.

(Mrs. von K. shakes her head despondently and sighs. She takes an unfinished handkerchief from her sewing bag and begins to hemstitch the border.)

(There is a silence for several moments during which time Bob seats himself on the ground and watches Chauncey intently, as he leans listlessly against the tree. All look questioningly at him when he at last comments:)

Bob. By Jing! there's one thing that's been worrying me more lately than a little, and it isn't my work in school, nor the eternal feminine, either. (sly glance at Mrs. von K., and at Dorothy). You know that compensation stuff old Ralph Waldo wrote so charmingly about; how he said there was nothing wasted, and that what one lacked in one thing he made up for in another,—and all that bunk. Don't you know, I don't believe a word of it.

Betty. You don't believe much in anything that you can't see before your very eyes, do you?

Bob. Ah, come off! I'm talking seriously now. On the level now, Mrs. von Klein, do you believe that?

Mrs. von K. I most assuredly do, Robert. Emerson was a great thinker, indeed, and I follow him implicitly, if not always understandingly. Something has evidently warped your judgment. I trust you shall not become a pessimist—a—Robert.

Bob. Well now, for example, look over there in the



neighborhood of that tree (*pointing at Chauncey*). Do you mean to tell me that string has any real value in the world? Does the law of compensation hold good there?

*Mrs. von K.* (*adjusting her spectacles, and looking intently*). I—I confess, Robert, I do not see any string.

*Bob.* O hang it! That's what slang does for a fellow. I mean that long, lean, lank, attenuated piece of humanity masquerading in man's wearing apparel.

(*Girls burst out into fit of hilarious laughter, while Bob hides behind Mrs. von Klein.*)

*Mrs. von K.* (*Raises hands in horror*). Mercy on us! Such language! You will be the death of me yet, Robert!

(*Chauncey shifts his position to rear.*)

*Chauncey.* Don't pay any attention to him; he isn't responsible for what he doesn't know. He's harmless.

(*Jane and Hal enter from left carrying pail of water between them. They set it down in rear center.*)

*Hal.* Well that layout certainly looks good to me! I'm hungry enough to eat a man off a horse.

*Betty.* You'll not have long to wait now, for everything's about ready. (*To Jane.*) Did you see anything of the fuel department?

*Jane.* (*with a wink*). Yes, I caught sight of them a time or two, and I never saw two people more interested in their work.

*Hal.* Jack had a start before he went to look for wood. He came out here with a chip on his shoulder.

*Bob.* Help! Police! He's pulled a joke at last!

(*Jack and Freda enter from right with fuel.*)

*Jack.* I'm with you, Bob! What's up?

*Bob.* O nothing much. An alleged joke is in our midst.

*Dorothy.* Never mind his foolishness, Jack. You make the fire for the coffee as soon as possible before

some of these hungry pirates make a raid on the table. (*Jack takes coffee pot and exits right.*)

*Jack.* (as he goes). I'm surely a boy scout when it comes to making these outdoor fires with one match. I'll have the coffee on in two minutes.

(*Professor Schnitzel is seen in the background looking into the trees with an opera glass. No one sees him but Hal.*)

*Hal.* Halt, or I shoot! (*Everyone turns in the direction indicated by Hal.*) (*The professor turns like a flash, greatly agitated, then, seeing the merry-makers he doffs his silk hat and bows profoundly.*)

*Prof.* Bless my heart how you startled me! I—I—I thought for a moment I was held up.

*Dorothy.* You are, professor, you are! We command you to dine with us!

*Prof.* Now—a—I—a—didn't—a—!

*Hal.* No excuses go, professor. You are my prisoner.

*Betty.* You are heartily welcome, professor. You are the very one we need to complete the family circle.

*Mrs. von K.* Yes indeed, my dear professor, you shall divide the honor of presiding on this occasion with me.

*Prof.* (*adjusting his spectacles*). Well on my word, if it isn't Mrs. von Klein! This is indeed a happy surprise. (*He shakes hands cordially with her while the others look on, greatly amused. Jack enters from right.*)

*Mrs. von K.* Now that everything is in readiness, let us find our places at the table for this sumptuous repast. Professor have this place. (*indicating head of table, farthest in the rear*).

(*All sit down by couples, Mrs. von Klein near the Professor.*)

*Prof.* I still insist that this is an imposition on my part, but as a captive of war, I have no choice. (*The victuals are passed and everyone takes hold without ceremony.*)

*Jane.* What research work are you doing now, Professor? You know I have an especial fondness for botany.

*Jack.* I notice that you carry a fine specimen with you a good share of the time. (*dodges a bread crust from Hal*).

*Prof.* I am interested especially, at present, in the study of toadstools and mushrooms. The whole subject of botany is an absorbing science, but this particular field is peculiarly interesting. Now these fungi are characterized in general by the fact that the mycelium lives entirely within the material which furnishes its nourishment.

*Chauncey.* (*passing pickles to professor*). Have a pickle.

*Prof.* No, thank you. They are entirely indigestible. As I was saying, the mycelium lives entirely within the material which nourishes it, and it occasionally sends up into the air the spore-bearing structure that is called the toadstool or mushroom.

*Chauncey.* (*passing olives to professor*). Have an olive.

*Prof.* I am sorry, but I must refuse, since there are so many artificially colored olives these days that I could not think of eating them. But again to my subject: Those forms that are known to be good to eat are popularly known as mushrooms, while those that are not edible or that are poisonous, are called toadstools.

(*Mrs. von K. and Jane listen attentively, but the rest converse in whispers. Jack exits right and returns with coffee.*)

*Prof.* The mushroom spawn that is sometimes prepared and sold in bricks to those who wish to grow mushrooms, is simply a mass of mycelium. These grow and push their way to the surface. As the pileus opens, it is joined to the stalk beneath by means of a layer of hyphae. This, in some species, in breaking away from the pileus, forms a ring or annulus about the stalk.

(Dorothy takes coffee pot and attempts to pour the coffee for the professor.)

*Prof.* Oh my dear, no. I would not dare to drink that nerve-wrecking fluid. I must keep my brain active and alert in the interest of science.

(Dorothy pours for all, while the professor continues.)

*Prof.* Upon logs, trees, and stumps many kinds of toadstools are found, but most abundant are the species of polyporus and other genera.

(At this juncture, Mrs. DeBracey appears in the background. She comes slowly toward the group.)

*Mrs. DeB.* I sincerely beg your pardon for thus rudely interrupting your conversation and intruding upon your privacy, but I have lost my way, it seems, and I am compelled to ask guidance from you.

(All turn and look at newcomer. Bob, however, rises.)

*Bob.* I shall be delighted to be of service to you in any way.

*Mrs. DeB.* You are most kind, I assure you. I was on my way to a Mr. Wilson's who lives some distance from the city, and on account of the ideal weather, I chose to walk. The wood offered a short cut there, and, at the same time, I especially wanted to take a stroll through it while the weather is fine. But just what direction I'm going now, I'm not quite sure.

*Chauncey.* (rising). Madam, I know this wood perfectly, and I can direct you to Mr. Wilson's very easily. If I may accompany you to the other edge of the forest I can make sure that you have your bearings perfectly.

*Bob.* Excuse me, but I shall not entrust the lady to your charge, Sir Knight of the Leaden Feet. I would be afraid our hapless stranger would be overtaken by Father Time before you ever got anywhere. (aside to Chauncey). Besides, I saw her first.

*Chauncey.* (advancing toward the now thoroughly embarrassed lady). I contend that you do not have the

decision in this case. We shall leave it to the lady, herself.

*Mrs. DeB. (much frustrated).* My dear young men! (*Here the girls look aghast at one another.*) I shall be only too glad to have either of you do me this great service, but I hope I shall not be left to decide which shall go, for I have no preference.

*Prof. Schnitzel. (rising and bowing profoundly).* My dear madam, if I may address you thus, in case of a controversy I deem it a Christian act, on my part, to be the arbiter. Now I, myself, know these woods like a book. I spend virtually three-fourths of my waking hours here in the interest of science. Therefore, since our young friends seem unable to come to an understanding, I offer my services gladly.

(*Mrs. von K. shows signs of agitation by spilling her coffee.*)

*Mrs. DeB.* I'll tell you how you might do. Why don't you all three come. I'm sure I shall have ample protection then.

*Bob. (to Chauncey).* Are you game?

*Chauncey.* Can a duck swim?

(*They advance toward the lady, who stands there smiling. Each offers his arm. She takes both.*)

*Mrs. von K. (rising, and much concerned).* Then you aren't going, Professor?

*Prof. (shrugging his shoulders).* Evidently not.

(*The three exit right.*)

*Hal. (turning to Betty and Dorothy. Dramatically).* Alone! alone! all, all alone! Alone in the wide, wide woods!

(*Freda, Jane, Jack and Hal indulge in a good laugh at the expense of the girls. Both Betty and Dorothy rise indignantly.*)

*Betty. (to Dorothy).* Well what do you think of that? (*Looks in direction of disappearing trio.*)

*Dorothy.* Think? Why it only confirms the opinion that I have had for a long time. Every man is as fickle as the spring sunshine. That April variety, I mean. You never know what they're going to do. I'm thoroughly disgusted, myself.

*Betty.* And just to think. They didn't have the courtesy to excuse themselves. And it had promised to be such a delightful outing. (*begins to cry*). I'm going home right now, and I'm through with every fellow in existence, forever. (*Mrs. von K. puts her arm about her and comforts her.*)

*Mrs. von K.* There, there, dearie! Don't cry! You can't expect anything better from them. I've had some experiences myself, and I confess men are not to be trusted very far.

*Prof.* (*rather awkwardly*). I—I—I feel like this is no place for a nervous man. With your permission, Mrs. von Klein, I believe I shall continue my search for specimens.

*Mrs. von K.* (*drawing herself up proudly*). You certainly have my permission to go.

*Prof.* I bid you good day, one and all.

(*No response. The professor slips away at left.*)

*Dorothy.* (*hastily bringing forward the basket and picking up dishes here and there from the table.*) Here's where I leave. (*turning to the other two couples*). I'm done with Bob Livingstone for good, and I'll say that you two girls are fools if you have anything to do with any of the click.

*Jack.* Am I a click?

*Dorothy.* You're not the whole thing. You're a little, integral part, though. (*very sarcastically*).

*Jack.* Well, you can't beat that! Eh, Hal?

*Hal.* I can't even tie it.

(*Jane motions Hal to her as she stands at left. He goes over to her hesitatingly. She half whispers*):

*Jane.* You see the situation, don't you? But in order

not to make Betty and Dorothy mad I'll have to side in with them. Do you see?

Hal. It's as plain as mud. Go on.

Jane. Now we must pretend to quarrel, also, so as to carry out the plot.

Hal. (loudly). To carry out the what?

Jane. Hush! Hush! The plot! the plot! We just pretend to quarrel.

Hal. You're on. When shall we begin.

Jane. Right now, but don't overdo it.

Hal. Well, here goes. (walks over toward Jack who is in close conversation with Freda at right). Ah, come on! Let's not argue with them. (winks at Jack). There never was a woman who had the sense of a gray goose, anyway. (aside to Jane). How's that? (Jane nods.) Let 'em go home, the babies!

(Jane picks up dishes to put into her basket, but says nothing. Jack and Freda separate and Freda packs up too.)

Jack. Can I help any?

Freda. No thanks, I'll call on you if I need you.

Jack. (going over to Hal and making a wry face). Say, Hal, won't you extract that stinger for me? (Holds up wrist.)

(Hal and Jack go over to front right and stand whispering. Hal has arm about Jack's neck. Then they turn and watch the others silently, as they prepare to leave. When all is in readiness, the girls and Mrs. von Klein start unceremoniously off stage at left.)

Hal. (shouting after them). Well, so long, disciples of Mrs. Pankhurst!

(Jane and Freda look around and nod smilingly at them, but without being observed by the rest. Hal and Jack seat themselves on camp chairs that have been left. Hal on left; Jack on right.)

Jack. (after a thoughtful pause). We seem to have full possession, don't we?

*Hal.* Exactly, doubtless. But somehow I wish that Parisian model had stayed at home today. Don't you?

*Jack.* You know my sentiments, I guess. I hadn't gotten half enough to eat when the lightning struck.

*(Bob and Chauncey come in at right, and, seeing the two lone boys, show-signs of great surprise.)*

*Bob.* In the name of cats what's happened?

*Hal.* *(dryly).* The birds have flown.

*Bob.* Out with it. What in Heck's the matter?

*Jack.* We are widowers, and all because of a picture hat, and a pair of fools.

*Chauncey.* *(taking up his old position at the tree, left.)*

CURTAIN.

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ACT II.

*(Room in Waldorf Flats. Entrance at right and left. Big window in center, rear. Fireplace at R., couch at left of window, table at R., center. Chairs, rugs, and other accessories to suit living room setting. Girls bring with them suitcases filled with various articles for room and bedroom adjoining, such as pennants, pillows, pictures, chafing dish, tablecloth, etc. It is suggested that a window-seat be provided for the big window and that this window seat serve for place in which to store dishes, etc., used by girls. It also serves to fill up back wall space. A steamer trunk should be provided for this act also. The decoration and fitting up of the room is left quite largely to the tastes of the girls.)*

*(Enter Dorothy, Betty, Freda, and Jane, preceded by Mrs. Wanthe Kale who carries a big bunch of keys.)*

*Mrs. W. K.* Well, here you are girls. Everything strictly modern and up to date. It is the chance of a lifetime for four girls like you to get apartments like these. Do you not agree with me?



*Dorothy.* Yes, it will make cozy quarters for us, and I think everything will be quite satisfactory. (*turning to Jane*). Don't you think so?

*Jane.* Yes, if the price is right.

*Dorothy.* Sure enough. I never once thought of that. I don't know what we'd do without a business head to this firm. You always were practical, Jane.

(*Mrs. W. K. stands at right with hands on hips.*)

*Mrs. W. K. (interrupting).* Oh have no fear about that, my young ladies. I assure you that you will be as surprised at my price as at the agreeable appearance of my rooms. Now the last occupant of this room stayed with me a year and a half. A recommendation in itself.

*Jane.* And what did you say was your rate?

*Mrs. W. K.* Indeed. How stupid of me. Only eighteen a week, my dear.

(*All show their astonishment, but Betty who stands at rear left, drops suitcase which she has thoughtlessly retained in her hand*).

*Jane. (in an undertone).* I'm glad you addressed me as "dear." It's so appropriate.

*Mrs. W. K. (in surprise).* Then you think my rate is high?

*Jane.* Oh no. Don't misunderstand me, my dear lady. We seldom are treated so cordially, even after we have known our landlady for a much longer time.

*Mrs. W. K. (turning to Dorothy).* For about how long do you think you shall want these rooms?

*Dorothy (turning to Betty).* About how long would you say?

*Betty.* Well, not over a year and a half, I'd judge.

*Dorothy. (to Mrs. W. K.).* I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll guarantee to stay two weeks at the present rate, and then reserve the right to vacate if we find the rooms are not to our liking.

*Mrs. W. K.* Suit yourself, my dear. Suit yourself.

That is entirely satisfactory. (*starts to leave*). You girls have no idea of the expense of running an establishment of this kind these days of high prices. Why, my janitor has asked for a raise in salary twice within the last month, and he isn't a fellow who worries much about finances either, as a usual thing. (*at the door, left*). Now make yourselves perfectly at home, girls, and I shall have the rest of your baggage sent up at once. (*exit left*).

(*Betty sinks into chair at left; Freda goes to inspect bedroom at right; Jane stands looking out of window; Dorothy unpins her hat and tosses it upon the table, and stands at right center.*)

*Dorothy.* (*after a thoughtful pause*). Well, I suppose there's no use moping around here like a funeral had just taken place. We're here and we'll have to make the best of it, that's all. Perhaps we can find more reasonable rates in a couple of weeks. At any rate we will be free from those hangers-on who have been pestering us for the past year and a half. They'll never find us here in a month of Sundays if we are just a little careful. (*picks up suitcase and opens it upon table*).

*Jane.* (*at window, without turning*). I'm not so sure I want to be *too* careful about it. (*Betty and Dorothy look at her quickly.*)

*Betty.* What. You aren't getting cold feet are you?

*Jane.* No, not exactly, but sometimes I feel like this is a fool escapade, after all, and that we might have found a better way of dealing with the boys.

*Dorothy.* (*indignantly*). Boys, indeed. Flirts, you'd better say. As for me, I'm going to stay here a while if I have to pay that old money-grabber the eighteen a week myself.

*Betty.* Now you're talking sense, Dorothy. Of course we are a good long way from the college, and we cannot have the good times we had at the dormitory, but even if our location is found out we shall not be pestered much with those—flirts. We'll show them that

they are not absolutely indispensable to college life. (*lays aside hat and proceeds to unpack suitcase.*)

(*Jane turns slowly from the window and with a sigh begins to unbuckle her suitcase.*)

*Freda.* (*coming in from right*). Say, girls, you ought to see that bedroom. (*girls all look up from their work*).

*Jane.* Why, what's the matter?

*Freda.* Matter? Oh, nothing *much*, only we'll have to draw straws to see who sleeps on the fire-escape. It's all right, what there is of it, but there's where the rub comes.

*Jane.* (*dryly*). I'm glad I brought my folding tooth brush along now.

*Dorothy.* I guess we can stand it for a couple of weeks, and then if we can't find another place we can go back to the old rooms. The boys, (*looking at Jane*) will surely have taken the hint by that time.

(*At this juncture a series of loud sounds are heard from the direction of the stairs, and all the girls look up in surprise. There is then a very slow and measured knock at the door.*)

*All.* (*in concert*). Come in.

(*Eza Lee Fatigued laboriously rolls a steamer trunk into the room and sits down upon it without saying a word. He mops his brow with a red, bandana handkerchief. Girls all look at him in amazement but say nothing for some moments.*)

*Jane.* (*standing on a chair hanging a picture at left of window*). I think there's a quarter in change there in my pocketbook. (*points to purse on table. Freda takes money from the purse and advances cautiously toward janitor who leisurely holds out hand to receive it.*)

*Eza Lee.* Thank you miss. This is a rare occurrence for me. It seems like a hustling, ambitious man is never appreciated, sometimes, but there are a few people left yet who really know a man's worth.

*Betty.* (*decorating mantle at right*). The fact of the

case is that most men don't deserve any credit. I know I'm not as competent to judge as some, but what little I've seen of them, fully convinces me that they're only a necessary evil which we must school ourselves to endure.

*Dorothy.* (*putting cloth on table*). Bully for you, Betty. Those are my sentiments to a dot.

*Eza Lec.* (*rising and yawning lazily*). Every one to his own taste as the old woman said who kissed the cow. I'd like to discuss the question more fully with you but I've got to hustle down and get at my work. (*walks toward door as if he never expected to reach it. His speech should also be in keeping with this excessively lazy manner.*)

*Eza Lec.* (*opening door at left to go*). This old world is nothing but a hurry and a scurry from morning till night. (*exit*).

*Dorothy.* (*engaged in fixing up room*). There's an example of a man for you. Not worth the powder to blow him up, and yet dying to be appreciated.

*Freda.* (*unfolding clothes from suitcase*). You mustn't be too severe, Dot. Every man didn't pilot a lost woman through a lonely wood, you know. (*walks toward right and enters bed room*).

*Betty.* Another weakling in camp. First Jane shows the white feather, and now Freda shows signs of repentance.

(*Freda heard singing in adjoining room.*)

*Jane.* (*arranging curtains at window*). She *doesn't* seem as solemncholy as you'd think a girl should who has just entered into a bargain to boycott most of the joys of life.

*Dorothy.* (*indignantly*). The joys of life. Look-a here, Jane Keller, if you're going to feel that way about it we'll give you a chance to withdraw from this association of man-haters while the withdrawing's good. We don't want any lukewarm members.

*Jane.* Don't get excited, sour grapes. You'll be as

ready to call it quits in a couple of weeks as any of us. You just see if you aren't.

*Dorothy.* We'll see.

*Betty.* I think the next thing on the program should be some supper. I'll confess that my trouble hasn't killed my appetite in the least. How about you, Dorothy?

*Dorothy.* Well, I guess I could partake of a little nourishment if I had a chance. (*Jane is seen to make gestures at window as if waving at someone across alley, but is not seen by girls.*)

(*A sound of breaking glass from the bed room.*)

*Betty.* There goes Freda again. She will break more stuff than we can pay for. (*holloas to Freda.* Hey there! What are you trying to do?

*Freda.* (*appearing at doorway.*) Oh thunderation. I was just turning around in there and I knocked the cologne bottle off the window sill and it fell three stories, that's all. Almost hit the hustling janitor, too.

*Dorothy.* Too bad it hadn't. Maybe it would have waked him up. I suppose he was leaning against the building to rest.

*Freda.* Say, when do we eat?

*Jane.* Second call for lunch.

*Freda.* I'll tell you what let's do. Let's draw cuts to see who goes after the eats. I'll make out four slips of paper and the first two names drawn go. How's that?

*Betty.* I'm willing.

*Dorothy.* Same here. (*Jane looks out of window and appears not to hear them.*)

*Betty.* (*to Jane.*) Say, are you president of the Open Window Club, or are you flirting with the janitor?

*Jane.* (*turning around.*) Neither. I'm trimming a new fall hat. Go ahead with your drawing. (*Freda writes names on four slips of paper and places them upside down on the table.*)

*Freda.* All right, now draw.

*Betty.* (after looking at the slip she draws). I lose.

*Jane.* (draws and reads). Dorothy.

*Dorothy.* (to *Betty*). It's you and I for it. Let's go.  
(They make ready to go.)

*Freda.* I'll tell you where the best grocery in town is. It's about five squares down, but it will pay you to go there. You remember that neat, little corner grocery we passed on the way up here don't you? On the right-hand side coming, just across from the Baptist church.  
(*Dorothy and Betty* at left ready to leave.)

*Betty.* I know where it is, but please remember that we are not training for a marathon.

*Dorothy.* (to *Jane*). Don't fall out of the window while we're gone.

*Jane.* (calling after them). Don't you worry about me.

(As soon as they have gone *Jane* rushes toward *Freda* and takes her by the hands and shakes them vigorously.)

*Jane.* *Freda*, you're the stuff. You arranged that to perfection. But how were we lucky enough not to draw the slips with our names on?

*Freda.* That's easy enough. I didn't write our names on them at all.

*Jane.* (pointing her finger at *Freda*). You're a cheat.

*Freda.* I know it, but you know that old saying about everything being fair in war, don't you?

*Jane.* Yes. I understand you perfectly, but let's get down to business. We must make the most of the opportunity while the girls are gone.

*Freda.* They'll be gone quite a spell if they go to that grocery I suggested.

*Jane.* The boys are moving in, did you know it?

*Freda.* Know it? If I hadn't been so absorbed in the deaf and dumb conversation across the alley with Jack, I wouldn't have knocked the cologne bottle off the window sill.

*Jane.* Now we mustn't let Dorothy and Betty know that the boys have located us if we can help it. At the proper time they can know but not now. The girls are both as stubborn as mules, and if we are to bring matters around all right again, we'll have to use some strategy.

*(A sound is heard at the window and both girls turn quickly. Jack pokes his head in through the window curtains. As the curtains are pulled aside, Hal is seen to be crawling along on a plank which reaches from the window across the alley to the window of the girls' room.)*

*Jack.* Is the coast clear? *(purposely slips as if about to fall. Girls utter scream and grasp each other in their fright.)*

*Jack.* Fear not, fair ladies, the plank only slipped a trifle. *(Crawls into room and turns to hold the plank for Hal.)*

*Freda.* *(greatly excited).* But why did you take such fearful chances, Jack?

*Jack.* *(mock heroically).* For you, Princess, for you.

*Freda.* *(to Jane, rapturously).* How splendid. How splendid. How romantic.

*(Jane sees Hal crawling along the plank.)*

*Jane.* *(greatly excited).* Do be careful. One false step and you are lost.

*Hal.* The way this plank bends and jiggles it's more like a two-step than anything else. *(Hal crawls into room and pulls the curtains together.)*

*Hal.* Well, how's everything in Pankhurstdom?

*Jane.* Just fine, so far, but you people across the way must not let Dorothy and Betty know that you have moved in or the whole plan is a failure.

*Jack.* Leave that to us. We have everything fixed, rear entrance and all.

*Freda.* We'll have to discuss our plans mighty hurriedly, for the girls will be back in a few minutes.

*Hal.* Well, state your proposition.

*Freda.* Of course it's out of the question for us to be seen talking together on the campus or anywhere else, and most of all, here in this room. What would Mrs. von Klein say if she found us here?

*Hal.* Never mind Mrs. von Klein, go on with your story.

*Freda.* I know Betty and Dorothy are suspicious of us, and they watch us like hawks. I think they'd make up with Chauncey and Bob in a minute if they weren't too stubborn to do so. They might have known the boys were only in fun.

*Jack.* And they absolutely refuse to listen to any explanation, do they?

*Jane.* That's the case exactly. Now it may be that we can arrange for a meeting for us all at the proper time and bring about a reconciliation.

*Hal.* Set the time and place, and all four of the Hall Room Boys will be on deck. Until that time we are to play dead, eh?

*Jane.* You guessed it.

*Hal.* But how are we going to arrange to communicate so as to see how everything's progressing? Shall we write?

*Jane.* No, that wouldn't do, for Dorothy and Betty get our mail about half of the time, and they'd know your handwriting.

*Hal.* But suppose we'd get someone to address the letters?

*Jane.* That would be all right, but an easier way would be to throw a note across from one window to another. Whenever you see the window-shade of the bed room window pulled just half way down, you may know that the coast is clear. If it's clear up or clear down, you are to keep mum.

*Jack.* That will be fine practice for the old pitching arm. (*making motion with right arm*). I'll buzz the notes across there like the 20th Century Limited.



*(A sound at the door. All look questioningly at one another. Jack crawls under table; Jane points to couch, and Hal tries to crawl under. The door opens slowly and the janitor pokes his head inside.)*

*Eza Lee.* I'll bring that other trunk up just as soon as I get time. I'm extra busy today.

*Jane. (with sigh of relief).* Any time within the week, Mercury.

*(Janitor closes door, and Hal and Jack emerge from their hiding.)*

*Jack. (crawling from under table).* I thought the jig was up that time.

*Hal. (crawling out).* Here too. Did you see me do the rapid disappearing act?

*Jack.* You're a shark at that, sure enough. *(Another noise at window, and Bob pokes his head in.)*

*Bob.* Hello, neighbors?

*Freda.* Go back, go back. I think I hear the girls coming. *(Holds up her hand to indicate silence, and all listen.)*

*Bob.* I can't. Chauncey's right behind me and I can't turn around on this blasted thing. It's all I can do to stay on while I'm going straight ahead. I don't know what would happen if I tried to crawl-fish.

*Hal.* Then come on in, and be in a hurry. Then we'll give a life-like demonstration of four fellows spanning the chasm. Hurry.

*(Bob clambers into the room. Chauncey has hard time getting across and causes much delay.)*

*Bob. (calls).* Come on, you chump, or back up, one of the two.

*Chauncey.* I can't do either. I'm stuck, I guess.

*Bob.* What's the matter?

*Chauncey.* I've got my coat tail caught on a nail.

*Bob. (greatly aggravated).* Back up a little, you fool.

Then you can get loose. (*Chauncey slips as if about to fall. All look greatly frightened.*)

*Bob.* Look out. For heaven's sake don't fall. You're about as handy as a cow with a side pocket. (*to Jack*). Help hold this plank from slipping until the lubber gets in. (*at last Chauncey gets across, and enters the room. He sits on the couch and trembles and puffs as if scared to death.*)

*Hal.* (*Starting to climb out of window*). Here goes. Follow me as soon as I get across. (*crawls out of window onto plank. Dorothy and Betty are heard in the hall.*)

*Jane.* Hurry, Hal. They're coming.

*Freda.* Shall I lock the door?

*Jane.* No, that wouldn't do.

(*Jack is just crawling out of window as the two girls enter. Bob and Chauncey, with no place to hide, stand by the window and look helplessly on.*)

*Dorothy.* Bob Livingstone, what are you doing here?

*Bob.* (*greatly embarrassed*). Why a, why—a. (*turns to Chauncey*). What are we doing here, Chauncey?

### QUICK CURTAIN.

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### ACT III.

(*A room in a tenement across the alley from the Waldorf Flats and directly opposite the girls' living room. The scanty furniture consists of three spring cots, one of them set up and the other two folded and slipped underneath. Cots at left of window. Window in middle. A plain kitchen table, or if desired, covered with oil cloth; a Morris chair; three or four common chairs; an alarm clock; either a gas stove or a small heating stove; a rude cupboard, made of a pine box and hung with cheap curtains; a small study table and study lamp,*

*either electric or kerosene; dish pan, tea kettle, four plates, four cups and saucers, knives and forks and other simple dishes used by the four constitute the room equipment. Several pots and pans may be hung on rear wall near stove; wash pan on pine box, water pail and coal bucket, several pictures cut from magazines, tacked to the wall; in short, the room is to represent a very plain interior fitted for kitchen, living room, sleeping room, etc. Walls should not be overly good in appearance, although this is not of great importance. Bob is discovered washing dishes at right of table, right. He has his sleeves rolled up and a flour sack tied about his waist for an apron. The dishes are piled up around table. Chauncey is lounging in Morris chair at left, reading.)*

*Bob.* (after quite a pause). I thought this was your night to wipe the dishes.

*Chauncey.* It was, but I was forced to break my engagement.

*Bob.* All right, old sport! You just wait until tomorrow night, and see how much help *you* have with the dishes! It's a cinch you needn't call on me.

*Chauncey.* Well, I'm not going to worry about it. You can never tell, there might not be any dishes to wash.

*Bob.* Say, on the level, Chaunce, you're the laziest mortal I ever looked at! What do you ever expect to amount to? You could go to sleep with work all around you. Did you ever worry about anything in your life?

*Chauncey.* Yes, I believe I did once. I just couldn't help it that time.

*Bob.* By grabs, I'm gettin' interested! When was that memorable occasion?

*Chauncey.* It was when I was balancing in mid air on the plank, three stories from the ground.

*Bob.* (laughing). I'll give it to you this time. I'll

vouch for the fact that you were really worried that time. You were as limp as a rag. (*laughs*).

*Chauncey.* (*meditating*). Now, laying all jokes aside, what good does it do to worry? Worry never helped a fellow to do a thing better, nor changed things one way or another. It simply makes one unfit for the task, and it gives the hair-dyers and wrinkle-removers a chance to make a living.

*Bob.* Yes I know that's good philosophy, but I believe a certain amount of worry is absolutely necessary if a fellow's ever going to amount to anything. You've got to turn things up. They are not going to turn up on their own accord, and I claim that you've got to worry some, or this turning-up process isn't going to work.

*Chauncey.* Well, I suppose that's true in a measure, but as a usual thing, a person's a fool to worry. Do you know, nine-tenths of the things we dread, and fume around about and worry over never happen? Did you ever think of that?

*Bob.* Yes, I *have* thought of it, and I know that many of the things I've worried about weren't half as bad when they happened as I thought they'd be. But with all of that I worry just the same. It's a disease with me, I guess.

*Chauncey.* Now you have it exactly. I'll admit that many are born to worry because they have inherited certain kinds of dispositions, which govern them more or less, but I think a person can gradually school himself so that worry is not a big factor in his life.

*Bob.* I guess that's true. At any rate you're a good example to the ones who wish to learn this anti-worry art.

*Chauncey.* (*reading*). Thank you.

*Bob.* (*after a pause*). Where did the fellows go?

*Chauncey.* Out to reconnoitre a little, I guess.

*Bob.* I guess we didn't strengthen our cause any when

Dorothy and Betty came back unexpectedly, and found us in their room.

*Chauncey.* Well I should judge not, if what Freda told Jack is so.

*Bob.* What was that?

*Chauncey.* (*putting book aside and rising*). Oh, she said the girls were as mad as wet hens, and besides, it took all kinds of persuasion on the part of Jane and Freda to keep the other two from thinking a conspiracy was on foot. I guess they fixed it up all right. At any rate, they're all bunking together yet.

*Bob.* (*finishing with dishes and emptying dish-water in pail at R.*). It begins to look like we're in for a long siege, doesn't it?

*Chauncey.* It sure does, but you can never tell about a woman. Sometimes they relent at the very time you'd think the case was hopeless. Right now, they might be figuring how they could retreat from their advance position without making it look like a rout.

*Bob.* Well, we should worry!

(*Hal and Jack enter from left. Hal throws cap on cot and sits down in Morris chair; Chauncey leisurely stretches himself on cot; Bob walks over toward Hal, Jack sits in chair at right of table R., and prepares to do some writing in a tablet which he takes out of pocket.*)

*Bob.* (*after eying the two questioningly*). Well, any news?

*Hal.* (*indifferently*). Oh, a little.

*Bob.* What did Freda and Jane report concerning the enemy?

*Hal.* Nothing much.

*Bob.* What the thunder are you so glum about? Playing detective, or did you get turned down?

*Hal.* (*picking up book and pretending to read*). Oh, don't be so inquisitive.

*Bob.* (*grunting disgustedly*). You're a fine grouch!  
(*No reply.*)

(*Bob seats himself at end of table, facing audience, opening a book which he has taken from reading table, and reads. Every now and then he looks at Jack, suspiciously, who is writing for dear life.*)

*Bob.* (to *Jack*). What-a you writin'?

*Jack.* (without looking up). A history of the South Sea Islands.

*Bob.* Another wise guy! Gee! you fellows must have had some razor soup or something.

*Jack.* (busily writing). Perhaps. (after some moments *Jacks* folds up paper very small, takes out a heavy nail and ties note to it. *Bob* watches curiously. *Jack* goes over to window, draws back arm carefully, and throws across alley. He stands there watching, and *Freda* comes to window and makes sign with her hand. *Chauncey* raises up on couch and looks at *Jack*.)

*Chauncey.* Well, by gosh! I've heard of gum shoe trips and *Sherlock Holmes*' stunts, but this has them all beat!

(*Jack* steps away from the window slightly, just so he can peek out, and motions for *Chauncey* to keep still. *Bob* turns and watches proceedings also. Just then the fire gong is heard in building across the alley. *Bob*, *Chauncey* and *Hal* listen, amazed, for a second.)

*Bob.* (excitedly). The flat's on fire! (gong rings again).

*Bob.* Yes, there goes the gong again! Hurry fellows, let's get ready to help! (*Chauncey*, *Bob*, and *Hal* start for door pellmell.)

*Jack.* (at window). Wait! Wait! They're at the window!

*Chauncey.* Who?

*Jack.* The girls! They're scared to death! Be quiet so I can hear what they say! (*Dorothy* calls across to *Jack*, while the other three boys crowd to window.)

*Dorothy.* *Jack*, they say the stairway and all is on fire below! We can't get out! You must save us! Oh,

what shall we do? What shall we do? (*Girls make confused noise and scream.*)

*Jack.* Quick, fellows, the plank! It's right outside the door! (*Bob and Hal rush to the hall for plank, while Chauncey holds door open for them. The plank is hastily brought in, and they all shove it out of window, and with difficulty get it across to opposite window.*)

*Bob.* (*at window*). Come on girls, it's your only chance! Don't stand and look, come on! That's the stuff, Freda! Be careful! be careful! Two of you girls help steady the plank at that end! (*Freda crosses and crawls inside.*)

*Chauncey.* (*to Jane on plank*). That's the stuff, Jane, you've got the nerve! You're doing fine! (*Jane crosses.*)

*Bob.* Come on Dorothy, you're next!

*Dorothy.* Oh Bob, I can't, I can't!

*Bob.* Yes you can! Just shut your eyes and crawl straight ahead! Come on, don't wait! (*Dorothy starts out.*) That's it, keep right on, you're doing fine! You're over half way across! There, I can reach you. (*reaches out to help her.*)

*Jack.* (*quickly to Bob*). Make her promise to forgive you before you let her in.

*Bob.* Do you promise to forgive me, Dorothy?

*Dorothy.* Yes, yes, anything, Bob!

*Bob.* And you will never get mad at me again?

*Dorothy.* No, never!

*Bob.* All right, come on in. (*Dorothy crawls in and sinks into chair greatly frightened. Hal and Jack look on and grin and then go to window to help hold plank.*)

*Chauncey.* Now you, Betty. Careful, now, careful!

*Betty.* I'm coming, look out!

*Chauncey.* (*as Betty reaches window*). Do you take an oath to forgive me?

*Betty.* (*tremblingly*). Yes, Chauncey.

*Chauncey.* All right, come on in. (*Betty crawls in*

and sinks into Morris chair at left. Bob and Chauncey start for door.)

Bob. Maybe we can do some good below. Hurry, let's go!

(Jack and Hal stand at right and look on laughing.)

Jack. Don't be excited fellows. It was only a false alarm.

Dorothy and Betty. (in concert). A false alarm! (They look at Jane and Freda who stand near window.)

Dorothy. (to Jane and Freda). Was that all a put up job?

Freda. I'll have to "fess up," it was. (Betty and Dorothy look at each other questioningly, and Bob and Chauncey do the same.)

Bob. (to Hal and Jack). Well, by George. You are all right after all. Put'er there. (walks over and shakes hands with Jack and Hal and Chauncey does same.)

Betty. (to Bob and Chauncey). You are the victors in this siege, it seems, but you will have to admit that you won only through a technicality.

Bob. Yes, there is a slight flaw in the title, but do you regret it?

Betty. No, I guess not.

Bob. (to Dorothy). Are you sorry, Dorothy?

Dorothy. No, Bob, I think I was foolish, and I'm tired of this make believe affair.

Bob. Then I might as well confess that I'm heartily ashamed of having caused all of this inconvenience and worry, but after all, we've had some fun out of it.

Jane. Fun? Why it was worth a life-time to see how scared those girls were coming across the plank.

Dorothy. Just as though you weren't scared, yourself.

Jane. Oh well, I had the fun of seeing you come over, while you were too scared to notice me. (Dorothy and Betty shake their fists at Freda and Jane.)



Betty. We'll get even with you all right. You just wait.

Chauncey. All's well that ends well, so let's not argue the question any further. As for me, I have visions of the good, old dormitory and a square meal.

Dorothy. And why did you stay in such a barren-looking place as this?

Chauncey. Can you ask that now?

Hal. (*clapping his hand over his heart*). Oh, this is too much. (*falls over in chair*).

Dorothy. You'll think it's too much. Remember we're not through with you either, Hal Wickland.

Hal. Do your worst. I die happy.

Freda. (*coming over to Dorothy and Betty*). Come on, we must be going. In your excitement you seem to have forgotten that we are paying rather a late call, and not chaperoned, at that.

Betty. Yes, we *must* be going. No doubt there will be enough scandal attached to our doings of late without adding insult to injury. (*All girls move toward door.*)

Bob. Just a moment before you go. Say, don't you think we can plan to get the professor and Mrs. von Klein together at another picnic or something? I know they're both dying to straighten matters up, and they don't know just how to go about it.

Dorothy. That's a good idea. We'll see Mrs. von Klein and get her to go with us, and you see the professor and bring him along and the rest will come out all right. We were the whole cause of their trouble, and I think we owe it to them to help right matters. Shall we do it, girls?

Jane. I vote aye.

Betty. I'm in for it. I've thought of that several times.

Freda. I think it's the thing to do.

*Dorothy.* Unanimously carried. How about *your* colleagues, Bob?

*Bob.* (to *Jack, Hal, and Chauncey*). What do you say?

*All.* (saluting). Aye, aye, Captain.

*Bob.* Then let's make Saturday the day. Saturday at 2:00 p. m.

*Girls.* All right, we'll be there. (*exit girls*).

*Bob.* (after door is closed). Well who'd a thought the solution to our little mystery would have come so soon? Here only a little while ago we were wondering how much longer we'd have to hold the fort.

*Chauncey.* It only bears out my statement that it doesn't do a fellow any good to worry.

*Hal.* But after all is said and done, you'll have to give it to Jack and me for solving the riddle, eh Jack?

*Jack.* Yes sir, we are the original peacemakers.

*Bob.* The day has been a rather strenuous one for me, and I don't know how you feel about it, but I vote to turn in and catch a few needed winks. And by the way, this will be our last night in the old nest. (*turning to Chauncey*). I believe this is your night to sleep in the Morris chair.

*Chauncey.* It makes no difference to me. I think I could sleep on the window sill if I had to.

(*Bob pulls out a cot and unfolds it, placing it at right of table right; Chauncey moves Morris chair to middle of room; Hal unfolds cot at left, and Jack uses the one at left of window. The beds are made during the next few minutes, and all seem in a merry mood; Hal whistles lowly to himself as he fixes his cot, and the others are humming a lively college air as they work. They hang up sweaters and pull pajamas and bed slippers from suitcases or trunk preparatory to retiring. Bob takes his pajamas and slippers and disappears behind screen at right, making hurried change. Others wait seated on their cots.*)

*Bob.* (*behind screen*). Say, how would you fellows have felt if one of the girls had slipped off the plank and fallen three stories to the pavement below?

*Jack.* We *were* taking an awful chance weren't we? But somehow I didn't think how dangerous it really was.

*Chauncey.* The thing that made it all the more dangerous was the fact that two of the girls were scared nearly to death by what they were sure was a fire. I'll tell you I breathed a sigh of relief when the last one was across.

(*Bob appears in pajamas and slippers, and crawls into bed and draws up the covers. Jack and Hal slip behind screen.*)

*Bob.* (*to Chauncey*). There I was worrying about what might have happened. But after all, it was a horrible risk to take.

*Chauncey.* About the same as sleeping in a Morris chair, I'd judge. A fellow's taking a chance of being crippled for life in this blamed thing. It is likely to give me curvature of the spine.

*Hal.* (*from behind screen*). I hope you don't get that. You're near enough no account now.

*Chauncey.* Speak when you're spoken to, will you?

(*Hal and Jack come from behind screen and crawl into bed, while Chauncey goes behind screen.*)

*Jack.* I'll bet any of you an athletic season ticket that I'm asleep first.

*Hal.* How are you going to prove it?

*Jack.* Why, ask me; I'll tell you. I'll have to hurry, though, for Bob's got a head start.

(*All is quiet and all three pretend to sleep. Chauncey turns light low and crawls into Morris chair.*)

*Chauncey.* (*after some moments in which he makes a vain endeavor to cover his feet and pull the covers up*

around his chin). Say, can't some of you help me a little? Hey, Bob.

*Bob.* (sleepily). Huh?

*Chauncey.* Come cover up my feet.

*Bob.* The next time you wake me up after I get to sleep, I'll sail a shoe at your head.

*Chauncey.* (after quite a pause). Say, Bob?

*Bob.* What in thunder do you want?

*Chauncey.* Oh, I just wanted to tell you before I forget it that I won't need your help on that dishwashing business tomorrow night.

(*Bob throws shoe.*)

#### CURTAIN.

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#### ACT IV.

(*Wood scene, same as Act I. Mrs. von Klein is discovered seated on camp chair at left; girls seated on ground near by.*)

*Dorothy.* Isn't this just the loveliest day ever, Mrs. von Klein?

*Mrs. von K.* It is, indeed, Dorothy, but it reminds me of another such day that began just as auspiciously; when joy and gladness reigned supreme in every heart. And then, that awful monster, discord, stealthily stole into our midst, and we were left sorrowing.

*Freda.* Oh, Mrs. von Klein, do not let your thoughts of that other day affect our happiness now. By-gones are by-gones. I'm sure I see no cause for mourning.

*Mrs. von K.* Perhaps you don't, Freda, but when you have seen as much of life as I have you will think differently. Life is too short to permit of even a moment's needless heartache. 'Tis true that you whose hearts are young, and whose spirits readily revive after sorrow may laugh away that incident when all bonds of

friendship were burst asunder, but to me, the breach is irreparable.

*Betty.* Mrs. von Klein, do you mean that you think the Professor will never be friendly toward you again?

*Mrs. von K. (quickly).* Oh, my dear Betty, I did not have him especially in mind, at all. No, by no means no. I was thinking of your own unhappiness and the bitterness which may have been engendered in your young hearts.

*(The girls look knowingly at one another and smile.)*

*Jane.* I feel perfectly sure that when the Professor is approached in the right way he will gladly forgive you, Mrs. von Klein, and the rest of us, who are entirely to blame.

*Mrs. von K. (sighing).* Possibly, but I have my serious doubts. You do not know the Professor as I know him. He is a man of great depth, and once offended, he is rarely conciliated. A man, essentially of high and lofty ambitions, noble character, and indomitable will and courage, yet he is very susceptible to discourtesy, and I fear his feelings are wounded forever.

*(The girls rise hurriedly, affecting great surprise.)*

*Girls.* Look! Look! Who's that coming?

*Mrs. von K. (rising and looking off stage).* On my soul! It's those pesky boys again!—And who have they with them? *(adjusts her spectacles).* Can it be possible? Yes, girls, it's the Professor. *(Mrs. von Klein is greatly excited, while the girls try to suppress their merriment. The four boys come on stage at right half dragging the reluctant Professor.)*

*Bob.* Here he is, girls. Pass judgment on him. He can't get away. *(Professor struggles to free himself, and appears very much excited and disheveled.)*

*Prof.* Listen to me, young men! Listen this one time! I cannot permit it! I must not come where I am unwelcome.

*Mrs. von K. (interrupting).* Boys, how dare you

treat your Professor thus? Have you no respect for learning! Do you not revere gray hairs? Listen to me before you have gone too far.

*Hal.* (holding out a hand as a signal for her to be silent. *Very pompously*). Have no fear, Mrs. von Klein. We have no evil intentions, I assure you. On the other hand, we have come on an errand of mercy, and, (turning to the girls with a grin). I trust also of love.

*Prof.* Young men, I insist that I be released at once! I cannot suffer this intrusion!

*Jack.* (still holding *Prof.* by arm). As a prisoner of war you have no choice but to do as commanded.

*Bob.* (to *Mrs. von Klein*, especially). We have thus forcibly brought the Professor here, because, as you can readily see, he would come in no other way. We have brought him in order to patch matters up, if possible. The Professor was in no wise to blame for the trouble some days ago. His motives were the best, and his actions were prompted alone by chivalry. And you, Mrs. von Klein, were dragged into the controversy because you were too devoted a chaperon to not take sides with the girls who have trusted you implicitly for so long. Let's all forgive and forget.

(Boys and girls applaud loudly, and the Professor rather reluctantly advances to shake Mrs. von Klein's proffered hand.)

*Prof.* Words cannot express the joy I have in once more feeling that all enmity between us has forever vanished. I assure you that I value your friendship very very highly, indeed, and I am genuinely sorry for any indiscretion which I may have been guilty of in that unpleasant episode which, fortunately, has such a happy termination.

*Boys and Girls.* Bully for you, Professor.

*Mrs. von K.* I thank you for these generous words. But I held you blameless from the start, knowing that it was out of the generosity of your heart that you ap-

peared, for the time, to ruthlessly sacrifice our long-standing friendship for a new one.

*(During the foregoing speech the boys and girls quietly withdraw and disappear at right and left in couples.)*

*Prof. (discovering they are alone).* Upon my word. Gone as if by magic. I dare say all this has been carefully planned by them. They are a jolly crowd and it gives them great joy to thus affect a reconciliation between us. *(Mrs. von Klein seats herself on camp stool in front center.)*

*Mrs. von K.* A reconciliation, indeed. That implies a breach of friendship at some time prior to this time. I assure you, my dear Professor, that my regard for you has never been lessened in the least.

*Prof. (drawing nearer).* How good to hear you say that, Mrs. von Klein. It raises me out of the slough of despond and places me triumphant upon the mountain top.

*Mrs. von K.* My dear Professor, you flatter me in thus valuing my mean worth.

*Prof. (kneeling beside her).* Not in the least, Mrs. von Klein. I could not undervalue your worth if I tried. To me you have always been my ideal, my hope, my guiding star. *(Mrs. von K. toys with her fan).* I have often trusted, hopelessly, it seemed, that some day I might break down that barrier of reserve which seems to hold us apart and then, some glad day to win and claim you as companion of my joys and sorrows, an ever-present ideal and helper. *(Taking her hand and kissing it.)* Oh, will you not assure me of this eternal happiness?

*Mrs. von K. (wiping her eyes).* Ah, yes, my dear Professor, if I only felt worthy of you.

*(At this juncture the girls and boys, as if by pre-arrangement, suddenly run in, and completely surround the Professor and Mrs. von Klein, dancing about them, hands clasped, showering them with flowers while they*

*sing a lively air. They then form a semi-circle about the couple and bow to them. The Professor steps forth and delivers the following speech with great feeling.)*

*Prof.* My dear young friends: I can in no wise express my gratitude to you, try as I may. You have made Mrs. von Klein and me the happiest couple in all the world. Years have been rolled away, and we stand here before you and the world of nature, sublimely happy.

*Bob.* Keep the change, Professor. The pleasure is all ours.

*Mrs. von K.* And now, children, there is but one more thing necessary to make my happiness complete.

*All.* Name it. Name it.

*Mrs. von K.* It concerns Bob, especially, and all, in a measure. Promise me to strive constantly to improve your native tongue, and discard all slang from your conversations wherever these may take place.

*Bob.* (*stepping forward and shaking Mrs. von Klein's hand*). I'll go you one if I lose.

CURTAIN.



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